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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ZAGREB 000631

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE (NARDI) AND EUR/PA/PD (HORNBUCKLE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [HR](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [HR](#) [IZ](#) [IZPREL](#)
SUBJECT: TFIZ01: CROATIA: POLITICIANS BACK GOC OPPOSITION
TO MILITARY ACTION WITHOUT NEW UNSCR

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REF: ZAGREB 615

CLASSIFIED BY: POLOFF A.F.GODFREY FOR REASONS 1.5 (B,D)

SUMMARY

11. (C) ALMOST ALL OF CROATIA'S POLITICIANS HAVE PUBLICLY BACKED THE GOC DECISION NOT TO SUPPORT MILITARY ACTION IN IRAQ ABSENT A NEW UNSC RESOLUTION (REFTEL). POLITICAL UNITY IN CROATIA IS A GENUINE RARITY. SOME LEADING GOVERNMENT FIGURES WANT TO TRY TO CATCH WHAT THEY THINK IS A WAVE OF LOCAL SUPPORT FOR THE GOC'S DECISION TO SAY "NO" TO THE USG AND ARE CROWING ABOUT THEIR "BRAVE" DECISION. OTHER POLITICAL OBSERVERS ARE DUMBFOUNDED BY THE GOC DECISION AND BY ITS MANY PUBLIC STATEMENTS. THEY ARE WONDERING WHY CROATIA'S POLITICIANS ARE MISSING ANOTHER EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO SHUT UP. END SUMMARY.

MESIC: US ACTION WOULD HAVE QUESTIONABLE LEGITIMACY

12. (U) PRESIDENT MESIC, IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN "SLOBODNA DALMACIJA" ON MARCH 19, TOOK A HARD INTERNATIONALIST LINE. HE SAID THAT THE U.S. "DEPARTURE FROM THE UN CHARTER FRAMEWORK CALLS THE LEGITIMACY OF THE ACTION INTO QUESTION." HE SAID THAT U.S. ACTION WOULD CREATE A PRECEDENT WHEREBY A COUNTRY THAT IS "NOT AMERICA, SOMEONE WHO IS STRONGER THAN THEIR NEIGHBOR, CAN IMPOSE THEIR SOLUTIONS" AND CITED CROATIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH MILOSEVIC. MESIC QUESTIONED WHETHER CROATIA NEEDS "THIS KIND OF NATO."

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DPM GRANIC: "NO" TO FUTURE USG REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT

13. (U) DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER GORAN GRANIC SAID THAT THE GOC IS "CONCERNED ABOUT THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND, OF COURSE DOES NOT SUPPORT ANY ACTION OUTSIDE OF THE UN." GRANIC SAID THAT THE GOC WOULD REJECT FUTURE U.S. REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT OF MILITARY ACTION "ACCORDING TO THE DECISION TAKEN BY THE COUNTRY'S LEADERS, WHICH IMPLICITLY STATES THAT IT MAY NOT BE AMENDED. I REPEAT THAT CROATIA WILL OPPOSE ANY ACTION WHICH IS TAKEN OUTSIDE THE UN."

SMALLER PARTIES GET ON THE BANDWAGON

14. (U) LEADERS OF CROATIA'S SMALLER POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE JUMPED ON BOARD AS WELL; THEIR COMMENTS WERE PUBLISHED IN THE MASS-MARKET DAILY "VJESNIK." FORMER FM MATE GRANIC (PRESIDENT OF THE OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC CENTER - DC) DECLARED THAT HIS PARTY DOES NOT SUPPORT MILITARY INTERVENTION WITHOUT A NEW UNSCR BECAUSE IT WOULD DIVIDE THE COUNCIL AND "COMPLETELY DESTABILIZE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE UN WITH UNFORESEEABLE CONSEQUENCES." DAMIR KAJIN OF THE REGIONAL PARTY ISTRIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (IDS) SAID THAT THE U.S. DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITHOUT A NEW UNSCR "DELEGITIMIZES THE ACTION AGAINST IRAQ, WHICH, LET'S BE TRUTHFUL, AT THIS MOMENT IS NOT THREATENING ANYONE." HE DERIDED THE STRONG PRO-U.S. POSITION OF THE OPPOSITION HDZ BY SAYING THAT HDZ PRESIDENT SANADER "LOOKS LIKE HE IS RUNNING HIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN MASSACHUSETTS, NOT IN CROATIA." HE SAID THAT

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CROATIA'S POLITICIANS ARE SHOWING AN "ENVIALE LEVEL OF UNITY."

15. (C) LUKA TRCONIC, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE HSS (THE COALITION'S SECOND-LARGEST PARTY) SAID "WE SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT POSITION" BUT EXPLAINED THAT HIS PARTY "HAS UNDERSTANDING FOR THE FRUSTRATION OF THE AMERICANS AND THEIR DESIRE TO PUNISH SADDAM HUSSEIN." EVEN THE FRINGE PARTIES ARE ECHOING THE RULING COALITION. ANTO DJAPIC, PRESIDENT OF THE CROATIAN PARTY OF RIGHT (HSP) SAID THAT "THE HSP DOES NOT ENDORSE THE USA AND ALLIES' ACTION IN IRAQ WHICH IS NOT

BACKED BY A RESOLUTION OF THE UNSC. THE MOTIVES FOR THE USA AND ALLIES TO ATTACK IRAQ ARE NOT IDEALS, BUT RAW INTERESTS OF A GREAT POWER. (COMMENT: PM RACAN SHOULD BE WORRIED, NOT COMFORTED BY THE SUPPORT OF THIS PARTY OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS.)

COMMENTATOR: WHY COULDN'T WE JUST BE QUIET?

16. (U) WHILE MOST POLITICAL COMMENTATORS HERE HAVE -- TYPICALLY -- FOCUSED ONLY ON THE EFFECT OF THE GOC DECISION AS IF IT HAD NO EFFECT OUTSIDE OF CROATIA, BRUNO LOPANDIC,

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ACTION SS-00

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USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY

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"VJESNIK'S" LEADING FOREIGN AFFAIRS COLUMNIST, LAMENTS THE GOC'S "PERILOUS SYNDROME OF REACTING OFFICIALLY TO UNOFFICIAL RUMORS." "FOR THE MOST PART, EUROPE IS SILENT, EXCEPT FOR CROATIA." CROATIA WILL NOT PLAY ANY ROLE IN THE DECISION TO ATTACK IRAQ AND ITS "EUROPEAN CLAMORING" IN THE PRESS AND PUBLIC WILL NOT DO ANY GOOD EITHER, HE WROTE IN HIS MARCH 18 COLUMN. HE ADDED THAT IF CROATIA'S "NEW" POSITION TO OPPOSE MILITARY ACTION OUTSIDE THE UN FRAMEWORK WOULD HAVE RULED OUT NATO ATTACKS ON THE FRY. WHILE HE AGREED WITH RACAN'S DECISION TO POSTPONE HIS TRIP TO LONDON, HE LAMBASTED RACAN'S "ILLOGICAL" DECISION TO TALK TO THE PRESS ABOUT WHY. IN SPEAKING ABOUT CANCELLING THE VISIT, RACAN SAID THAT 'OBVIOUSLY WE ARE NOT ON THE SAME SIDE' ... THIS STATEMENT IS ONE OF A SERIES OF DIPLOMATIC GAFFES WHICH ARE UNFORTUNATELY TYPICAL FOR A CROATIAN FOREIGN POLICY BURDENED WITH SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS AND IGNORANCE." BOTH LOPANDIC AND AN INTERVIEWER FROM ANOTHER NEWSPAPER EXPRESSED THE BELIEF AS OUTLINED IN REFTEL THAT THE GOC WAS SIDING WITH FRANCE IN ORDER TO CURRY FAVOR FOR ITS EU APPLICATION.
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